

Old Heidelberg Apartments and Cottages
Southeast corner Bradford Avenue and Weverly Street
Pittsburgh
Allegheny County
Pennsylvania

HAES No. PA-431

HAES
PA
2-PITBU
217

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA
Reduced Copies of Measured Drawings

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. PA-431

OLD HEIDELBERG APARTMENTS AND COTTAGES

HABS
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Address: Southeast corner of Braddock Avenue and Waverly Street, Pittsburgh, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania

Present Owner: Huss Brothers, 5972 Baum Boulevard, Pittsburgh 6, Pennsylvania

Present Occupant: Various tenants

Present Use: Apartment dwelling

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

- A. Original and Subsequent Owners: Original owner, Robinson and Bruckman; present owner, Huss Brothers. (Intermediate owner, if any, was not determined.)
- B. Date of Erection: 1905.
- C. Architect: Frederick G. Scheibler, Jr.
- D. Notes on Original Plan and Additions: The original plan consisted of the large main block with the two rear wings. Additional dwelling units (four on the north and one on the south), known as "The Cottages," were also designed by Scheibler and constructed in 1908. The general fabric of the building remains essentially unchanged.
- E. Secondary and Published Sources: James D. Van Trump, "Frederick G. Scheibler, Jr.," Charette (October 1962), pp. 11-15. The American Architect and Building News (January 5, 1907), p. 20; floor plan and brief accompanying text. Harold E. Dickson, A Hundred Pennsylvania Buildings (State College, Pa.: Bald Eagle Press, 1954).

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. General Statement:
 - 1. Architectural character: The building represents a major work of Frederick G. Scheibler, Jr., one of Pittsburgh's most important architects and a pioneer in the modern architectural movement. Of particular interest are the symmetrical apartment plan with the asymmetric and greatly varied fenestration, decorative glass, sculptured plaster ornament, and exposed I-section steel lintels.

2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

B. Technical Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions:

- a. Apartments: Rectangular main block with three projecting front porches and two rear wings (set in from the ends); three stories, eight-bay front. Main block--124'-8" x 35'-2"; two rear wings--each 27'-6" x 35'-5".
- b. Cottages: Two stories. Northern cottages, irregular shape (57'-1" x 120'-4"); southern cottages, rectangular shape (25'-6" x 60'-8").

2. Foundations: Rubble masonry (2'-0" thick), whitewashed where exposed to the exterior.

3. Wall construction: Red brick bearing walls with an exterior finish of cement plaster, painted white.

4. Structural system, framing: A brief note in the American Architect and Building News (January 5, 1907) indicates that the building is "carried out in reinforced concrete." All other available information on the structure indicates that it is traditional brick bearing wall with timber floor and roof framing. It would seem that the American Architect is in error.

5. Porches:

- a. Apartments: Three triple-tier porches project from the west (front) elevation. The center porch (two bays wide--small utility room in the center separates the two private porches) is of masonry construction, is three stories in height, and has twin two-story arched openings with triple rectangular openings above (sculptured plaster sills). The two other porches are each one bay wide with first levels of masonry (rectangular opening with exposed I-section steel lintels) and upper levels frame.
- b. Cottages: Northern cottages--small covered entrance porches. Southern cottages--full width, partially covered entrance porch.

6. Chimneys: Two octagonal chimneys in the main (apartment) block. Eleven rectangular chimneys--one in the main block, two in each rear wing, four in the northern cottages, and two in the southern cottages. All chimneys are finished with cement plaster.

7. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors:

- (1) Apartments: Twin entrances on the west (front) elevation, one within each side of the large, three-level porch; heavy, wood, two-light, paneled doors with fixed arched light above (opaque decorative glass), all set in a simple arched opening. Plain flat-head doorway leads from each apartment to a private porch. Plain flat-head doorway leads from each apartment to a rear service stair.
- (2) Cottages: One-light (opaque decorative glass), paneled wood doors provide access to the cottages--No. 1, No. 2, and No. 5 on the west elevation; No. 3 and No. 4 on the north elevation.

- b. Windows: Greatly varied window treatment. The sash is typically wood, both casement and double hung. Of particular interest is the decorative treatment of the glass and several window surrounds. The triple openings on the upper level of the center porch have scalloped plaster sills. The center opening on the second level has a ceramic mosaic overpanel containing the name "Old Heidelberg" and colorful tile side panels. High relief sculptured panels (mushroom motif) between double tier of windows on the north side of the central porch.

8. Roof:

a. Shape:

- (1) Apartments: Steeply pitched gable roof over main block with central portion set slightly higher with projecting front slope (extending to cover large porch) and common rear slope. Gable roof over each rear wing (ridge running east and west).
- (2) Cottages: Series of intersecting gables.

- b. Cornice: Very simple projecting cornice with plain bargeboard at gable ends.
- c. Dormers: Very low-arched roof dormer at the center of the west (apartment) elevation; seven separate lights of graded sizes arranged horizontally.

- C. Technical Description of Interior: Interior description based on the Historic American Buildings Survey drawings and on personal inspection of the entrance lobbies and the first-floor south apartment.

1. Floor plans:

- a. Apartments: Four apartments per floor, bilateral symmetric plan, each half being T-shaped with a short central entrance hall and shallow vestibule. The entrance hall appears only on the first floor and the comparable space is absorbed by the apartments on the upper floors.
- b. Cottages:
 - (1) Northern cottages: Four separate dwelling units divided by party walls--each unit has two floors and a basement. The western units, No. 1 and No. 2 (basement below grade), are set one level above the eastern units, No. 3 and No. 4 (grade drops abruptly exposing basement on the east side). Plans generally have three rooms per floor with entrance foyer and central stair.
 - (2) Southern cottages: Two floors and a basement, simple rectangular plan with short rear wing, three rooms per floor with stair along the party wall.

2. Stairways:

- a. Apartments: Central three-run, open-well stair in each half of the main block--closed string with decorative plaster relief and wood paneling under the stair in the vestibule. Open steel utility stair incorporated in the east end of each rear wing.
- b. Cottages: In the northern cottages there is a central dog-leg stair in each unit. In the southern cottages there is a stair along the party wall, short run to landing with split run to second floor.

3. Flooring: Matched hardwood floors set off by hardwood border.

4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster painted white.

5. Doorways and doors: Apartment entrance door--board and batten with small window (colored leaded glass). Interior doors are both decorative (paneled with battens and square, nine-light window openings) and plain.

6. Trim: Tasteful use of wood paneling, decorative plaster relief, and colorful glass and tile.
7. Heating: Unique gas-fueled fireplaces, one in the living room (plain white marble mantel and jambs with checkered tile decoration and plain plastered breast, rectangular opening with copper surround and convex copper hood), and one in the dining room (no mantel, rectangular opening with copper surround, flanked by decorative tile panels, tall copper hood with slight flare and decorative brass trim).

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: Situated on the east side of Braddock Avenue (corner of Waverly) in a quiet and mixed residential, commercial, and institutional district.
2. Landscaping and walks: Grass area and sidewalks to the north and west; ground drops off abruptly to a service drive on the east (rear).

Prepared by John D. Milner, Architect
National Park Service
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